

Zephaniah 1:7,12-18

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Background:

Zephaniah preached in the Southern Kingdom of Judah while Josiah was king (640 - 609 BC). Nineveh had not yet been destroyed (2:13) so we know he preached before 612 BC but what we don't know is whether he preached before or after Josiah's reforms in 621 BC. He would have been a contemporary of Jeremiah. He is the only prophet to have his lineage traced back for four generations and as his great, great grandfather was Hezekiah we suspect that this must have been King Hezekiah. He also sometimes uses priestly vocabulary but there is no conclusive evidence that he was associated with the temple.

Main Focus:

The Day of the Lord - The prophets often saw things but as they were future for them as well it seems they did not always understand exactly what it was they were seeing. He saw the destruction of Jerusalem but it is not clear exactly which invasion he was seeing - the Scythian, the Assyrian or the Babylonian. We need to remember that prophecy is fundamentally moral in principle. What do I mean by that. A judgement is given to encourage people to change. Probably the clearest example that most people know is the story of Jonah and Nineveh. Forty days and the city would be destroyed. They repented. The city was saved. But the other side of the coin is equally true. If they had not repented the city would have been destroyed.

Another theme which is common to most of the prophets is judgement to Hope. The doom and gloom bits come first, the restoration of God's people is at the end. We see this in the prophets and in places like Revelations as well.

So What About the Common People?:

So did they believe Zephaniah? Did they even care? Most likely not. They would have just carried on with their everyday lives, discussed the political situation, made plans for the future and generally just lived life.

What About Us?:

We are not only individuals - we are also a community and a nation. We share in the sins of fellow countrymen.

